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England Reclaimed

BY OSBERT SITWELL

POEMS

Argonaut and Juggernaut
Out of the Flame

PROSE

Triple Fugue
Discursions
Who Killed Cock Robin?
Before the Bombardment

England Reclaimed

A Book of Eclogues

By

Osbert Sitwell

Duckworth
3 Henrietta Street, London
1927

First Published 1927

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THE sequence of poems, which the author now has the honour to present to the public, represents the work of two years, and forms in itself a complete volume. Actually, however, it is only the first part of a trilogy, on the second volume of which he is already at work. The scope of the other two volumes at which he aims is indicated in this one by the "Introduction," which is intended to cover the whole series. The first book consists entirely of eclogues, rustic and pastoral poems; the second will deal with a country town, the third with the cosmopolitan life of the cities.

In this volume the author has attempted to find what is, perhaps, a new medium—an imaginative and poetic portraiture, by a synthesis of which he aims at recording a broad panorama, essentially English, but which seems now, by force of circumstance, to be slipping away from us into the past.

GRANADA, *April* 1925
SYRACUSE, *April* 1927

To Edith

DEDICATION

To Edith

To you, sad child, upon the darkened stair,
Poor flaxen foundling of the upper air,
The sweep of whose young wings drew down e'en then
That ugly hate from stupid men and women,
Refined by terror till they could divine
In you th' existence of an inner shrine
Where burnt a flame most rare, while yet their rage
Was heightened by your presence, to this age
So alien that your shape, your very skull
Is now Red Rag to True Blue British bull—
A democratic bull that bends the knee
To naught save money, noise or false simplicity—
To you, who ever fled material halls
And loathed the bloated light on drawing-room walls ;
To you, who could pretend no gratitude
For flashing rattle, answering crash, of platitude,
Preferring your own world of tapestry
From words and music woven, where more easily
Your young, flat limbs could move than on a plane
Where, since you loved to read, they burnt again
Your books, or, since you hated cruelties,
And feared such insects, made you kill the flies
That fatly slept or crawled across the glass ;
To you, whose pale and legendary face,
Still I can see beneath ancestral trees
That greenly shrill with birds, deep drone with bees,
As now you pause among the battlements
And fanes of flowers, to inhale their scents
—Such blossoms as must stoop to you—tall wide-faced flowers
They seemed, that grew packed close against those towers—
To pluck a blossom with your gothic fingers,
So pointed thin, in which the blood yet lingers
Of tombèd chivalry and arts now dead
—Yet fingers which for us have fashionèd
New instruments of beauty, and have found

New Indias of modern sense and sound—
To you, that magic country's overlord,
Ascetic artist of the painting word,
Your whole life bent to this one, selfless, cause
Of netting beauty with a phrase or pause,
While ev'ry foe to truth makes it his duty
To persecute you in the name of Beauty,
And when you point a new path, leaves his booth
With screams of " Truth is Beauty, Beauty, Truth,"
Misunderstands, complains, insults and bullies,
Then whips up all the sillies and the dullies
And makes them laugh (for laughter is their lever),
With ev'ry suburb shouting " Well, I never ! "
To you, who earn the ever-righteous hate
Of crowds of giggling, chic cads, I dedicate
These memories of a time when children three
We walked all winter by the white-winged sea,
And under shelter of its lion voice,
Proclaimed the name of Beauty, made our choice.

INTRODUCTION

When men were children, and each race was young,
The praise of many a hero, bravely sung,
Resounded through each honeycombèd rock
In bee-like droning, smote with sudden shock
The mountain top, where in green-tufted tent
By sweetness drowsed, the shepherd breathes the scent
Of poignant herbs, outprest by scrabbling goat
That quavers to him in a voice remote
As laughter of old men. He stirs not. Past
Him floats the song to brush the golden mast
Of full-rigg'd fruit trees, where they breast white foam
From fallen petals at their foot, to roam
Through echoing pastures, or invade the woods
Which now reveal, beneath receding floods
Of brutish blackness, goddess-trodden dells
And alleys, whence Apollo shade dispels
With level eye. All animal and furred
Had been that darkness, which with the first word
Man spoke to Man was quelled, by laughter banished;
And yet that fearful darkness has not vanished,
Still lurks within our blood—ape-haunted land
Where ev'ry Stone Age God can still command
With grunting utterance.
This chant of love,
This man-made music of the myrtle grove,
Was new then; in its cadence brooded Spring,
The sad months of miraculous blossoming;
Wherever shrilling water met green shade,
Within that laughing, leafy palisade
—As nightingales, that with a diamond tongue
Cut glassy darkness—first the poets sung.
No sooner in these havens had they trod
Before by song they made a Demigod:
All forms of music shared the sacred throne
And Priest and Poet could be seen for one.

. . . .

Heroic figures are now obsolete,
So Demigod and Devil find retreat
In minds of children—as rare beasts and men,
Elsewhere extinct, persist in hill or fen
From man protected—where each form assumes
Gigantic stature and intention, looms
From wind-moved, twilight-woven histories :
For them each flower teems with mysteries.
Thus poems, no less than mythology,
Are imaged through in inner, innocent eye
Preserved from childhood, of a vision clearer,
More true than truth, that brings each object nearer
And draws a strange strength from the hidden God
—For Poetry is the wisdom of the blood,
That scarlet tree within, which has the power
To make dull words bud forth and break in flower.

. . . . .

The eye of childhood faithfully records
The destined figures creaking on the boards
Down alleys three—country, abroad and town—
The foreigner, the burgess and the clown :
A false perspective tricked t' appear more deep
Than those dark caskets in which now they sleep,
For children, as they grow, see Fate unfold
These puppets, pack them in their native mould.

. . . . .

Now let us wake them : make Miss Mew sit up
To proffer us that kindly, wonted cup
Of tea, with "just a dash of green tea in it" ;
Her wrinkled laughter tinkles like a linnet
Among the tea-cups, pecks the ornaments
—The china-cats, the tinselled tournaments,
The ribbon work, which frames in blue and buff
Lord Beaconsfield, and Uncle's box of snuff,
The comrade in his circumnavigation
Of globes grown gay : this fabulous relation
Is often hero of preposterous tales,
Has raided slavers, and has tackled whales

In single combat : green eyes open wide,
A white-hair halo foaming like a tide
About her gentle head, she finds escape
In tales of murder, piracy and rape :
Herself believes in these exciting stories
She blends of books she's read and memories—
Meantime sad mirrors of mahogany
Reflect one sequel to monogamy.
Let Mrs. Hague awake, to hunt her aitches
Down avenues which yet their flight enriches,
Each aitch a rustic goddess, with a crook,
That stirs to life within her green-cut nook :
Let that old soldier, Major Nicodeme,
Provide us with a braggadocio theme.
All these and others let us now implore
To rise, shake on their dust, and speak once more.
Before oblivion's creeping, greedy sea
Shall wash this dust away irrevocably
Beyond our reach, let us the past despoil,
Reclaim these precious yards of English soil.

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PROLOGUE

Now watch these phantoms,
How they tremble into being,
Amble, tremble into ample phantoms,
Tumble into their small wants
—Such few desires,
Garden, food, fires—
Watch these phantoms
How they now are being,
Listening . . . . . hearing,
Looking . . . . . seeing,
Loving . . . . . fearing.
While to tinge their moods, stiff-jointed moods,
The dumb, the sad, the sunset shadow
Of the old house broods.
Alas, again, the ample phantoms tremble,
Tumble and crumble out of their few needs—
Crumble . . . then crumple up.

TOM

The farmhand Tom, with his apple and turnip face,
Grumbles, grins and groans through the long summer hours,
Reviles St. Martin, by whose grace
Thus he must plod through the poppies and cornflowers.
Night is a stretch of dead and drear slumber,
Then up again, and again he must lumber
Into his clothes and away through the park,
Carrying pails,
Must wade through the dark,
Till even the comforting darkness fails,
Tousled and blinking,
Clanking and clinking,
A very robust
Traditional ghost :
For clanking and lank
The Armoured Knight
Rides down the dank
Shadows in flight ;
Grass stiff with frost
Shows grey as steel
As the Conquering Ghost
Clanks down the hill.
Now the first cock crows,
Impudent, frightened, through the dark ;
Then a cold wind blows,
And that whining dog, Dawn, begins to bark.
Then the Knight in Armour
Passes away,
As the growing clamour
Proclaims, " It is Day."
The trees grow taller,
The gate is shut.
The Knight grows smaller,
Goes smaller,
And out.

MRS. HAGUE

Old Mrs. Hague,
The Gardener's wife,
Was not to be enclosed in any formulas.
She seems to stand upon a little mound
Of pansies,
Primroses,
And primulas.
Outlined against the pale blue eye of northern spring,
Heavily planted in this printed muslin beauty
Of clumps and spots and dots and tiger-stripes,
She swelled with ideas and ideals of duty,
Emphatic,
Rheumatic.

Mrs. Thatch,
The wife, she was sorry to say,
Of Lord X's gardener
—If such one could call him—
Was silly, town-bred, what Mrs. Hague would call
—Well, she really did not like to say it,
Did not know what to call it ;
Shall we say a Ne'er-do-Well ?
And all the time the primroses, the wind-flowers
Opened their eyes and pressed their nodding heads
Against her, and the moss seemed ready to
Run up those rugged limbs,
The lichen ready
To crystallise its feathery formations
Along these solid branches.

If not upon this flower-sprinkled mound,
Then Mrs. Hague stood
Pressed in the narrow framework of her door,
And fills it to our minds for evermore.
Out of the slender gaps
Between the figure and its frame,

Was wafted the crusty, country odour
Of new bread,
Which was but one blossom of the hedges
That Mrs. Hague had planted.

For Mrs. Hague was childless,
And so had wisely broken up her life
With fences of her own construction,
Above which she would peer
With bovine grace,
Kind nose, kind eyes
Wide open in wide face.
For

Monday was Washing Day,
Tuesday was Baking Day,
Wednesday h'Alfred 'as 'is dinner h'early,
Thursday was Baking Day again,
Friday was a busy day, a very busy day,
And Saturday prepared the way for Sunday,
Black satin bosoms and a brooch,
A bonnet and a Bible.

Nor were these all :
There were other more imposing barriers
Of Strawberry Jam in June
And Blackberry Jelly in October :
For each fruit contributed a hedge
To the garden of Mrs. Hague's days.

These fences made life safe for Mrs. Hague ;
Each barrier of washing, mending, baking
Was a barricade
Thrown up against being lonely or afraid.
This infinite perspective
—The week, the month, the year—
Showed in the narrow gaps
Between her and the door,
As she stood there in the doorway,
Narrow as a coffin.

Oh, who can describe the grace of Mrs. Hague,
A Mrs. Noah limned by Botticelli,
'Mid flowering trees, green winds and pensive flowers ;
A Rousseau portrait, inflated by Picasso ;
Or seen in summer,
As through a tapestry
Of pool, exotic flower and conifer ?

As Daphne was transformed into a tree,
So some old elm had turned to Mrs. Hague,
Thick bole, wide arms and rustic dignity.

FIVE DRAWINGS OF MR. HAGUE

For Adrian

(1) IN THE PARK

No little mound,
Printed with garlands of spring flowers,
Serves as a pedestal
For Alfred's memory,
But a bare hillock in a wooded park,
—Where graze in clusters
The rouged and dappled deer,
With their large eyes and their thin ankles—
A miniature Stonehenge,
Of which green-aproned Alfred
Was the one vast monolith left standing ;
A monosyllabic monolith ;
For thirty years of childless married life
Had made him mute.
Alfred loved trees and silence,
And here Mrs. Hague
Dared not disturb him :
For, if Mrs. Hague's home was her castle,
Fortress of home-made jam and new-baked bread,
He ruled
The garden,
Park,
And potting-shed,
While the hothouse was a studio
In which he worked as artist,
And the peach-houses, the cucumber-frames
Were his also.

Vast monolith he stands,
A landmark many a mile off,
Surveying the trees,
Inspecting leaf and bark and branch—
For Mrs. Hague
Is not the only tree he loves :

Had he wished, then,
To turn her to a tree?
Was it a love of trees,
Or a hope of silence,
That had once compelled him
To an Apollonian pursuit of Mrs. Hague?—
Surveying the trees,
That stand up solitary and tall
Until becoming rounder, smaller,
Across the fawn-soft slopes
They spin toward the far horizon,
Where foam the woods in green, receding waves—
Gay, singing woods,
In one of which was already growing,
Was, indeed, nearing its full growth,
The boarding for his large, his heavy, coffin.

(2) IN THE POTTING-SHED

Oh, for words with which
To paint him there from life,
As he stands in the potting-shed
With the bass like golden hair,
And with his insignia,
Scissors, basket and pruning-knife,
Amid a universe
Of unripe pears and golden bulbs,
As the stove burns warmly,
The stove crackles brightly,
And there is a smell of warm wood,
A warm wooden smell as of trees growing
(Do not ask why the trees are growing,
Do not ask why the trees are growing).

Here is harboured
The strength of the garden,
Enough growing-power
To make the whole country-side flicker
Next year
With the red and pink candles of the early spring,
And to illumine again
That little hill
On which for ever in our memories
Stands Mrs. Hague.

(3) IN THE HOTHOUSES

If Mrs. Hague belongs to Primavera,
It is to the winter,
A Flemish winter of snow and crackling iron twigs,
That one must assign Alfred.

But Alfred is a master of paradox ;
When the English earth is cold
As the lama-ridden uplands of Tibet,
Its temperature subnormal, hungering
To take to itself the lately living, longing
To be warmed and fed
By the annual holocaust of influenza,[1]
When the lake has sheathed its mirror,
And the white giant has put a glass in his eye,
When the shivering margins of the lake
Have wrapped themselves in the feathers of dead swans
—Then I open a glass door,
And in a crystal transparency,
As though within a block of ice,
I find Alfred
—Alfred, white Sultan,
Rajah Brooke of tropic isles—
In one of his dominions ;
This one is a forest in the Congo,
A swamp in distant, pear-shaped South America,
The coast of New Guinea
And a jungle in Cochin-China.
With crimson and damson
The Nile and the Am'zon
Emblazon
This halcyon
Of growing and blowing
Warm blossoms and leaves.

[1] See Appendix, p. 99, note (1).

(4) THE SPELL

Here the waves of Ceylon
Meet the breakers of the Archipelago—
Breakers trimmed with pearls
And with the eyes of dead sailors—
And out of all this is born
A grinning octaroon of a hybrid
    (H'Alfred not 'imself to-day,
    Bothered about that 'ere new i-bread).
Here I find him,
Brain, huge stature, and artist fingers
Placed at the entire disposal
Of the most diminutive need
Of an almost invisible blossom.

Here, then, Alfred is a signed Van Eyck
Inserted in a Gauguin panel ;
The perfumed and exotic steam
Distilled from Welsh coal—
Heir-at-law
To vast and prehistoric forests—
From African forests
And Papuan jungles,
Forms round his hairless head
The halo of a saint,
Or the contorted and mottled writhings
Of tropical branch and root
Crown him with Medusa's tresses.
    (Can he, perhaps,
    Turn Mrs. Hague to stone
    As well as to a tree,
    And thus make silence doubly sure ?)
Fair and rather hairless
He is caught among the variegated tendrils
As in a cobweb,
While the hairy and gnarled arms
Thrust out toward him

Seem the legs of a gigantic,
Carnivorous spider,
Which ever drains his strength,
Consumes his years.

Impartially he would distribute praise
Among his turbaned favourites,
Garish or unobtrusive :
" Them's a lovely thing," he would say,
Indicating a novel invisibility
From the juncture of the Blue and White Niles,
Or pointing out some gargantuan magenta blossom
Newly arrived from the impenetrable forests of Brazil,
" Them's a lovely new thing,"
And he muttered an incomprehensible spell
In horticultural latin.

(5) DISCORDANT DAWN

When the cock-crow stretches
The air tight as taut string
Of basso or violin,
Alfred washes and dresses
And hopes for an early spring.

Heavily,
        Warily,
Ever
        So cleverly
He treads through the garden
Where the cold night still lingers,
Though the gold salamander
Flickers its red-crested head
Above the hill yonder.
Now each sharp scent
Is doubly vehement,
Though the frost's white fingers
Pinch the thyme
And bruise the lavender.

An elephant,
                Pendent
Over the frames,
Where the warm violets glisten
In mauves and magentas—
                The lips of Infantas—
In brick red or heliotrope,
The robes of Cardinal or Pope of Rome—
He murmurs their names
And the flowers listen.

Now a bonfire crackles,
Boldly flashes its golden comb,
Till the acrid scent
Of each frosty plant
Is lost in the firmament.

MARY-ANNE

(1)

Mary-Anne,
Wise, simple old woman,
Lived in a patchwork pavilion,
Pitched on an island,
Feeding the piebald and the tartan ducks.

Flotillas of ducks
Lie low in the water,
And Mary-Anne seems
The Duck-King's daughter.
The floating ducks crack up in their arrow-pointed wake
The distorted, silent summer painted in the lake,
And the days disappear
In a leaden stare.

Then Mary-Anne waddles
Through the evening cool,
And a smell of musk
Lingers by the pool,
For the trembling fingers of the honeysuckle
Wring out the blue and the dew-drenched dusk.

At night the pavilion
Is hung by a silver cord
That the nightingales plait
With their intercoiling song.
Within Mary-Anne mutters
The Word of the Lord,
Till the candle gutters,
As the summer sighs outside
And taps
At the shutters.

The silver-threaded wire
With which the nightingales
Suspended her pavilion
Was not the sole support it seemed :
For there was a direct attachment,
An umbilical cord to Heaven.
Her webfooted world
Teemed with four-leafed clovers,
With tea-leaves, cards, new moons,
And every sort of augury.
For was she not
The Seventh Child of a Seventh Child
Born under Venus,
Had she not seen the Blue Man ride
Away, the bleak night that the late lord died ?
Not frightened, never in the least,
But seeing things,
Constantly.

Opposite on the shore
Was the Cedar Avenue,
Where fallen fragrance hushed the footsteps,
And there,
Quite often of an evening,
Mary-Anne could see
The Cavalier lord walking,
More conventional in death than in life ever,
Carrying his handsome head beneath an out-turned arm.
It was he who had done all this for Mary-Anne,
Who had made the lake and given it countless things to mirror ;
Who had made the broken flights of steps,
The balustrades, the floating-terraces
And colonnades, wherein Italian winds
Whispered and sang their arias—
Winds that he had netted centuries ago
In the plumed grottoes of a Roman garden—
And statues that the years had fretted
To limbless, eyeless, lipless lepers.

It was he, too, who had planted the park with hawthorns
That prance like red and white chessmen
Through the chequered springtime.

(3)

In the winter her pavilion
Was a tent of swansdown.
The windows tightly closed
Showed through their brittle yellow ice
A fern, and cubèd walls.
The wild geese thrust their long necks
Out into the cold air above,
And the white feathers drifted up to the window.
Then the Family would come down,
Like so many cats after the birds, she always said.
The snowflakes would sway down
And thud,
thud,
thud
would sound the falling pheasants.

MR. AND MRS. NUTCH

For Sacheverell

(1) MRS. NUTCH

Deep in the summer wood
Under a patch of sky
Crouched Mrs. Nutch,
Sworn foe, harsh enemy
Of every cobweb, mouse and Roman Catholic :
Crouched Mrs. Nutch
An ancient owl in spectacles,
An owl diminishing, alas, from year to year,
Slipping down out of sight
Behind the warm shelter of an apricot tree—
That billowed green leaves over golden stars.
For Mrs. Nutch and this tree,
Though she tended it
And it bore fruit for her,
Were marching in contrary directions.
The tree grew taller
As Mrs. Nutch grew nearer to the ground,
Whence one sprang,
And by which the other
Was soon to be swallowed up.

In the very height of summer,
When the smell of hay
Wandered down the long lanes of the wood,
Banished the damp smell of the bracken ;
When the long, triumphant evenings
Planted their scarlet banners
In the very citadel of the hostile night,
Then Mrs. Nutch would stand in the doorway,
While her spectacles flashed back
The sun's victorious adieu,
Or would peep over
The spires of the campanulas,
As the evening winds

Ring their blue and white carillons—
Bloated capitalist campanulas,[1]
Which to prosper
She must feed with blood.

. . . .

Few were her recreations:
There was the "Ebenezer"—
Stony acropolis of every mining-village—
She could ponder, perhaps,
On the Pope of Rome,
Or the Whore of Babylon:
Read a passage she had found
In the newspaper
Aloud to incurious Mr. Nutch:
Then there was a musical box that tinkled "Carmen,"
Combing out luxuriant tresses with its golden teeth,
And her own cracked quavering
Of the "Hallelujah Chorus"—
A treat, this one, for others
As much as for herself,
To be served out to children
Instead of cakes or sweets.
After it, she would lie back,
Panting, in her chair,
As an owl pants in a holly-bush.
Sombre fires flickered in her eye,
As she sat there exhausted:
And then, suddenly,
As an aeroplane takes flight,
She would soar again after a fluttering, lustrous cobweb

[1] See Appendix, p. 99, note (2).

(2) MR. NUTCH

Mr. Nutch,
Brown-bearded bear,
Chased the scamps of boys through fruit trees.
"Scamps," he called them,
But it was a serious affair,
Breaking down the Palings
And Stealing Property.
Clumsily he would grab and ramble,
Angrily he would dart and grumble,
Heavily he would sway and shamble
After the nimble boys.
He would stumble among the trees,
Full-branchèd apples
That sagged beneath their rosy swags,
Or crabs that trailed their bitter-sweet rockets
Across the crisp autumn air.

Bombardments of apples
And impudent laughter
Met Mr. Nutch
Where'er he might wander,
His crinkled boots crusted with crystals
Under the glittering cobweb-tangled autumn.
(Oh,
If only Mrs. Nutch
Could have tidied up the season,
What a different autumn it would have been,
With its neatly piled pyramids of apples,
Sorted according to size and colour,
Even the branches graded,
Placed symmetrically
One above another,
The grass dry, well-aired
And of an even height !—

But, as it was,
There, heavily trudging,

Angry and out of breath
Mr. Nutch must grab and ramble
From one walled garden to another.
At his approach
The birds would flutter in the fruit nets,
Bump and struggle in the fruit nets ;
Each small bird that pecked the honeyed heart
Of golden or grape-blushing plum,
Was in reality a vulture
Feeding on Mr. Nutch's entrails—
Mr. Nutch,
That Prometheus bound to an orchard.
But the birds would flutter and struggle,
For Mr. Nutch
Was the natural enemy of every bird,
However soft or gaudy-feathered,
Just as Mrs. Nutch
Was the sworn foe
Of every cobweb,
Mouse and
Roman Catholic.

(3) MRS. NUTCH, MR. NOYES AND MYSELF

Mrs. Nutch's constant expectation
Of the second coming,
A pleasurable but revengeful picnic,
Where the proud were, perhaps, to be more degraded
Than the humble exalted,
Disturbed my nights,
Filled them with the lion-mouthed roarings
Of drums and trumpets.

And so I lay awake,
Hearing the owls
Hooting round in the darkness,
While ever so far away
A loud-pounding goods-train
Lumbered along the southern path to London—
Lumbered along, had I but known it then,
To the precise rhythm of Mr. Alfred Noyes' verse.
For every train at night
Sings its own song
As surely as a bird.

. . . . .

Then silence,
Mr. Noyes had finished ;
The owl still snored,
Deep, ever so deep
In the holly,
Heigh-ho ! in the holly.

(4) MRS. NUTCH IN HER ARM-CHAIR

No wonder she was tired, she thought,
Working her fingers off, as one might say,
Working her very fingers off,
Every day except the Seventh Day.
For, ancient owl in spectacles,
She must sweep down continually
Upon her rightful prey,
The velvet-footed, clockwork-moving mice
That tittered so teasingly
Behind the panelling
Upon the Sabbath
(Oh, they knew, they knew),
Or she must organise a battue
Against the spider
In all his wicked, silky machinations.

(1) MOPING FRED

Fred Nutch,
The final though not favourite offspring
Of the warrior pair,
Would in himself have blended,
One supposes,
Two such royal strains—
Male gun and female broomstick—
But such, emphatically,
Was not the case.
He would not sweep or shoot :
Instead
He hid within the wood
Or *Read*
Among the roses
(Oh, you could see it in his face, you could),
A process widely noticed, rightly recognised
As " Moping "—
Hence
" Moping Fred."

(2) IN A NUTSHELL

Young Nutch, They said,
Would never be the Man
His Father was :
Because
He did not know how to manage,
Carried no weight
In evidence against the Boys—
Straddling across the creaking limbs of ancient apple trees,
Hanging their coronals of laughter
Untidily among the branches
As they climbed and clambered
Up in green cradles, golden bowls of light,
Clashing their coronals against the tiding silver of the songs
Of birds that sang more easily again
Because of the deceiving voice of that Delilah autumn
Receiving them into the heart of her false spring—
Would not even help his Father
Pursue the scamps—
Scamps *he* called them—
Through the golden corridors of the orchard
(Clumsily Mr. Nutch must ramble,
Angrily and alone must grumble,
Heavily and alone must shamble
After the nimble boys)—
Would not slit open the soft,
Warm, silver stomach of a rabbit,
Though its faunal ears were matted with blood,
Would not crucify an owl upon a barn door
Or help the old man out in any way :
Was,
To put it in that tooth-splintering
Yet well-chewed platitude, a nutshell,

Too fond of Moping
And of reading Books,
Charges synonymous
And polyonymous,
Almost as serious
As Breaking Down the Palings and Stealing Property.

(3) THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

No, he would never be the Man
His Father was,
    For what could he do ?
He was no naturalist,
    For, though he saw them oftener than most,
    He would never shoot scarce birds
    Or watch convulsive wings
    Of the most rare and flower-bright butterfly
    Shudder to stiffness in the lethal bottle.
        (Specimens, it was easy to see, meant nothing to him.)
He was no botanist,
    For he would not root up even the rarest plant
Nor endorse in any way
That doctrine distorted,
Made flattering to the Ruling Mob,
That the fittest survive.
    (So, if you're here, you reap the compliment :
    The more, the merrier,
    The Mob is fitter than the Man,
    The Present fitter than the Past,
    A man more fit than any butterfly,
    A mouse, in any house
        (Oh, if only Mrs. Nutch had known it),
    More fit by far than any elephant
    That plods and ponders through the Indian Jungle—
    And yet you do not make the high
    Less high by killing it. You find,
    Though there was only one of him for all mankind,
    Christ is more Christ, though crucified.)
What could he do ?
    He moped :
Refused to help his Mother lay a trap
For soft, dusk-footed mice—
    Who yet
    Display a taste in food
    More suited for a flaming English Colonel,

Gorged for a lifetime on the devil-tongued,
The dragon-breathing, spices of the East
And now enjoying a well-earned jubilee
Of curry and chutney in a Cheltenham club,
Than for such tiny, timid rodents—
Declared that cobwebs
Were outside his scope,
Refused to see the Pope
Lurking and grinning in each corner,
Would not assist
The quavering swell of hallelujahs,
Till Mrs. Nutch would often say with sighs,
" It's my belief
Music means Nothing to that Boy."

What could he do ?
He read—
Which put ideas into his head,
Transformed the steel-blue lake
Into the wine-flushed sea Leander swam,
His body moving like a silver fin
Through the transparent tides,
And changed the Rother, sinister, dark snake,
Into the stream where floats the little ghost
That so loved Hamlet,
Transformed the dell that fluttered with wild roses
Into a darker grove of myrtle and of ilex,
Where you could shelter from a foreign sun.

What could he do ?
Yet, for a time
Moping appeared to pay Fred Nutch,
Who made his way
And went to London
(That stronghold—
So Mrs. Nutch
With all her wise, owl-eyed distrust
Of bricks and mortar,
Was convinced—

That impregnable sanctuary
Of mice and spiders,
That Babylonian cornucopia
Overflowing with scarlet Popes).
Was doing very well,
Considering . . .
We heard.

But still, no good, They said,
Would ever come of Moping.
Fred Nutch would never
Be the Man his Father was !
Never !
Because . . .

And then the War came
And he never was. . . .

MR. AND MRS. GOODBEARE

For Thomas Balston

(1) ELEGY FOR MR. GOODBEARE

Do you remember Mr. Goodbeare, the carpenter,
Godfearing and bearded Mr. Goodbeare,
Who worked all day
At his carpenter's tray,
Do you remember Mr. Goodbeare?
Mr. Goodbeare, that Golconda of gleaming fable,
Lived, thin-ground between orchard and stable,
Pressed thus close against Alfred, his rival—
Mr. Goodbeare, who had never been away.

Do you remember Mr. Goodbeare,
Mr. Goodbeare, who never touched a cup?
Do you remember Mr. Goodbeare,
Who remembered a lot?
Mr. Goodbeare could remember
When things were properly kept up:
Mr. Goodbeare could remember
The christening and the coming-of-age:
Mr. Goodbeare could remember
The entire and roasted ox:
Mr. Goodbeare could remember
When the horses filled the stable,
And the port-wine-coloured gentry rode after the tawny fox:
Mr. Goodbeare could remember
The old lady in her eagle rage,
Which knew no bounds:
Mr. Goodbeare could remember
When the escaped and hungering tiger
Flickered lithe and fierce through Foxton Wood,
When old Sir Nigel took his red-tongued, clamouring hounds,
And hunted it then and there,
As a Gentleman Should.

Do you remember Mr. Goodbeare,
Mr. Goodbeare who never forgot?
Do you remember Mr. Goodbeare,
That wrinkled and golden apricot,
Dear, bearded, godfearing Mr. Goodbeare
Who remembered remembering such a lot?

Oh, do you remember, do you remember,
As *I* remember and deplore,
That day in drear and far-away December
When dear, godfearing, bearded Mr. Goodbeare
Could remember
No more?

(2) A TALK WITH MR. GOODBEARE

Turning in, under the arches of the elder-bushes,
With their rank, deserted smell,
One would find Mr. Goodbeare,
Surrounded by metallic music—
Music of wood and steel—
The central figure of his own
Ballet Mécanique ;
Saw, plane and chisel
Ground their various teeth and molars
Loudly, ferociously,
While he accompanied them
With indicative gesture
And appropriate word—
For Mr. Goodbeare was attached
To every kind of saw,
Verbal or material,
Was fond of proverbs and the Bible.

Mr. Goodbeare
Was constantly being put in mind of things :
Anything would suggest anything to him,
In the manner of modern poetry.

Far be it from me,
As the Book has it,
Mr. Goodbeare would say,
To cast the First Stone,
But those who live in Glass 'Ouses—
'Ot 'Ouses, I might say—
Should not throw stones.
(*Chorus*)
(Break no bones.
Make no bones.
While if the Oak comes out before the Ash
There's going to be a Splash.)

In the old days,
Good old days,
Real old days,
When everyone knew exactly what he had to do,
When a man knew his business,
And the place was kept up,
When everyone knew his own job,
And No One
Presumed,
Then, I may say,
The Gardener
Was only too pleased to look in
And have a talk :
But now,
What with Goings-on in the 'Ot-'ouses,
I had better *not* say
What I know—No, Sir.
And the saws, the planes, the chisels
Emphasised with metallic understanding,
With mechanical precision,
Mr. Goodbeare's subtleties of feeling.

(3) MR. AND MRS. GOODBEARE

Mr. Goodbeare's parlour was a paradise
Of polished wood, a haven of joinery,
A heaven of varnish.
There were brackets, shelves, shields
And cupboards, with ferns traced on them
By his artistry,
And even wooden vases, turned
So beautifully, and full of dried, dull grasses,
Tied with dusty ribbons
That rustled suffocatingly
In the dry wind from the door.
Fantastic flights of Mr. Goodbeare's imagination,
Cricket-bats combined with dragons,
And improbable bows and loops,
Framed-in the almost legendary
Topiary of beard and whisker—
Tied in True-lover's Knots,
In which Mr. Goodbeare's friends
Had at one time extravagantly—
If elegantly—indulged.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Goodbeare herself appeared no mean feat of turnery,
As she creaked into the room
In her best black satin dress.
The lines on her face,
Of hairy yellow wood just cut,
Had been incised, perhaps,
By Mr. Goodbeare's verbal saw,
Just as his actual one
Had roughly shaped her figure.
Carved from one tree-trunk
She appeared,
Save for a golden-gleaming tooth,
A weird, wild tooth
That flashed in sympathy or anger.

Mr. Goodbeare was a diplomat
And played off Mrs. Hague 'gainst Mrs. Nutch——
Yet sometimes I feared that Mrs. Goodbeare
Thought that dear, bearded, godfearing Mr. Goodbeare
Remembered remembering
Too much.

(4) MR. GOODBEARE AT WORK

Under the shade
Of the elder-bushes,
In the speckled glade,
Where the thrush-coloured toads crouch
About to spring,
Where the toad-coloured thrushes
Learn to sing,
To shake their notes
As do Prima-Donnas
From white, fat throats ;
When the tulips flaunt
Their proud bandannas,
And the cuckoos haunt
Us with mocking hosannahs,
Then, if you pass
Betwixt orchard and stable,
You can hear the saw shriek
From the Carpenter's table.
With saw and with plane,
The colour of rain,
He turns the old trees into shelves ; or, again,
Into hives for the bees
That seek golden ease
In the cups of the flowers
Battered down by the showers,
Blue-cold as the claw
Of the plane or the saw
That make for cattle a pen,
Or fashion coffins for men.

. . .

But if Mr. Goodbeare
Planes the planks, and prepares
Caskets for men's skeletons,
Alfred for this atones,
And takes him unawares
By planting flowers
For Mr. Goodbeare's dry and tired bones.

(5) MR. GOODBEARE'S COTTAGE

How Mrs. Goodbeare
Could ever have contrived
In that Sahara of dry grasses and dry wood
To suffer " from rheumaticks something dreadful "
Remains her secret
—The only one which Destiny allowed her.

For Mr. Goodbeare, being a carpenter,
Enjoyed immensely the effect
Of windows,
Tightly closed
And nicely, very nicely, painted,
Of well-turned wood,
Well-seasoned,
And of painted putty
(Oh, the painted putty !),
While the neatly-fitting panes
Gave him an exquisite sensation,
Unknown but to his trade.
The glass panes gave a gloss
To anything behind,
And brought to mind—
French Polish,
Zenith of evolutional anthropoid achievement.
Then there were always plants,
An aspidistra or two, behind the ice
That shut them from the northern world.

Sometimes the windows looked
Like mountain waters rilling over ferns,
Sometimes the fleshy red lip of a cactus
Touched them to strange exoticism,
Or, again, the sun flashed down on one
Till it resembled
The golden tooth
That gleamed in sympathy or anger.

No air was there within—
Except the dry wind creeping
And squeezing and moaning and whining under the door
While the house was sleeping—
For no window was ever open,
Neither upon the glittering steel flowers of the frost,
Nor on those fantastic blossoms
Spun by the sun with aid of summer rain
Among most ordinary green leaves,
Nor on those magic crystal lilies
Which the rain beats up
Upon hard paths
And which dissolve and die in blossoming,
Nor ever on the cornucopia
Of summer noons weighty with full-blown roses,
When the Red Admirals ride smoothly
Down the painted tide of petals,
Furl their shuddering sails
Deep in the harbour of the flowers' heart—
But for her only on to valleys biblical,
Valleys that still were
The Church of England haunt and habitat
Of Baal and Jael
('Tis true the wooden pin
Excited his professional interest too),
Of flaunting, dizened Jezebel
And strings of generating names,
Nimrod, Omri, Nehemiah and Melchisedek—
For him, on to dry lawns of rattling, pressed grasses,
On to perspective-twisting pastures
Of the things remembered,
And now growing larger as they roll away
Toward the horizon, or upon
Desiccated forests of artful fretwork,
Or lone logs of wood, unseasoned and unpainted,
Still rooted in the earth—
Logs which would cut up beautiful
Into shelves : then into boxes, into frames,

Just dainty odds and ends,
So very handy, and the fruit of skill ;
Meantime the unremembering, unambitious dove
Croons languorously
High up in Mr. Goodbeare's elm tree.

MR. AND MRS. SOUTHERN

For Hazel

MRS. SOUTHERN

(1) MRS. SOUTHERN'S ENEMY

Even as the shadows of the statues lengthen,
While, when the glowing glass below is broken,
The plunging images are shaken,
For the young, blue-wingèd god is woken,
Sighs, stretches, shivers, till his muscles strengthen
So he can trample down the flowers, forsaken
By their droning, golden-liveried lovers, tumble
Among them till their red mouths tremble,
Already in the ancient house, whose shadow dies
With the slow opening of its hundred eyes,
Already, even then, Night the Black Panther
Is slinking, creeping down the corridors,
Lithe-swinging on her velvet paws,
Sharpening her treacherous claws
To frighten children.

And then it is
I seem to see again
That grey typhoon we knew as Mrs. Southern,
Spinning along the darkened passages,
Watching things, tugging things,
Seeing to things,
And putting things to rights.

Oh, would that the cruel daylight, too,
Could give us back again
Dear Mrs. Southern,
Dear selfless, blue-lipped Mrs. Southern,
Cross, mumbling and transparent Mrs. Southern,
With her grey hair,
Grey face,
And thinly-bitter smile,
In wide blue skirt, white-spotted, and white apron ;

On the very top of her head she carried a cap,
An emblem of respect and respectability, while
As though she were a Hindu charmer of snakes,
Her hair lay coiled and tame at the back of her head.
But her actual majesty was really the golden glory,
Through which she moved, a hurrying fly
Enshrined in rolling amber,
As she spun along in a twisting column of golden atoms,
A halo of gold motes above and about her,
A column of visible, virtuous activity.
Her life was a span of hopeless conflict,
For she battled against Time,
That never-vanquished and invisible foe,
She did not recognise her enemy,
She thought him Dust :
But what is Dust,
Save Time's most lethal weapon,
His faithful ally and our sneaking foe,
Through whom Time steals and covers all we know,
The very instrument through whom he overcame
Great Nineveh and Rome and Carthage,
Ophir and Trebizond and Ephesus,
Now deep, all deep, so deep in dust?
    Even the lean and arid archæologist,
    Who bends above the stones, and peers and ponders,
    Will be his, too, one day.
Dust loads the dice,
Then challenges to play,
Each layer of dust upon a chair or table
A tablet to his future victory.
And Dust is cruel, no victory despising,
However slight,
And Dust is greedy, eats the very bones ;
So that, in the end, still not content
With trophies such as Helen of Troy,
Or with the conquering golden flesh of Cleopatra
    (She, perhaps, understood the age-long battle,
    For did she not prefer to watch her pearl

Dissolve in amber wine,
Thus herself enjoying
Its ultimate disintegration,
Than let Dust conquer such a thing of beauty?
Was not the asp, fruit-hidden,
The symbol of such understanding?),
He needs must seize on Mrs. Southern,
Poor mumbling, struggling, blue-lipped Mrs. Southern,
For Dust is insatiate and invincible.

(2) WHAT SHE LIKED

Mrs. Southern was too mild a name
For Dust's Arch-enemy,
Too mild a name
For such a bitterly-sweet activity.
There should have been more of the touch of the east wind in it.

For half a century this grey typhoon
Harried and hurried the girls if they tarried,
And worried and flurried them till they scurried along.
She was always,
She said,
Catching them at it,
Loitering as if there was nothing to do,
And laughing, too. She'd teach them
To laugh, she would.
It wasn't for the Likes of Them to laugh.
A lot of loitering, lardy-dardy lazybones
She called them.
Thus she reprimanded and rebuked and scolded,
And scored their names, placing against them
Imaginative but opprobrious epithets,
Specially applicable to girls, moulded
With an accusing index finger
In any dust she found
On table or on window-pane.

Slave to the Lares and Penates
Of other people,
She had no wish to stray outside ;
Too busy in perpetual conflict
Even to visit Mr. Southern in his market-garden,
She felt no lure of light or trees or flowers.
No :
What she liked was
Workmanship.
A cairngorm juggled into the rough likeness

Of Queen Victoria's head, on one side,
And an elephant upon the other :
A negro's face in ebony
Just like a negro :
A woven tree
Just like a tree :
A picture of a butcher's shop
Just like a butcher's shop :
With a mangy dog slinking away with a bone
Just like a dog that slinks away with a bone :
The marble dimples in a marble baby's knuckle
Just like the dimples in a baby's knuckle—
" That,"
She would confide to Mrs. Hague,
" Is where the Hi !-talians "
(That strange, exclamatory and emotional race)
" Have got *us* beat.
You would know it for a baby's knuckle *anywhere*."
(Alarming thought, for children,
To find a marble baby's marble knuckle
Thus wandering in the void.)

(3) TWILIGHT

Through long and intimate association
With the objects under her protection,
Mrs. Southern had the air
Of being in league with inanimate objects,
Conspirator with chairs and tables,
Sentient walls, inquisitive-eyed portraits.

So, when I hear faint creakings from a board
Or in the twilight the muffled hurry and harry
And worry and flurry of something that scurries along,
I wonder what it is, and whether Mrs. Southern wanders
And works and suffers, yet bound to chair and table ;
For she was always there,
Whenever you looked round.
She was there all the time :
Had been there the whole time
While you had called her :
Had been there for fifty years,
Standing there, looking after things.

Is there, I wonder, is there in the guilty dust
Some indecipherable message
Written with accusing but invisible finger ?
By a cruel fate, herself now actual part
Of that same foe she battled for a lifetime,
Surely she would betray him if she could,
As she watches him and his ally, the Black Panther,
Stealing on velvet paws
Through the long corridors,
Then slink into the garden where the red mouths tremble
Till all the points of colour crumble,
Till the young wind-god is woken
And battles with them as his muscles strengthen,

By his day-long drowsiness forsaken ?
Now the glowing glass below is broken,
Now the plunging images are shaken,
And the dying shadows lengthen,
lengthen,
lengthen.

MR. SAMUEL SOUTHERN

(1) PORTRAIT OF MR. SOUTHERN THROUGH THE AGES

However thick the quilting of the dust,
However thick the quilting of the past,
Beneath we find the actual, the updrawn
Predynastic knees ; [1]
And then,
Blossoming from these, [2]
Out of it is thrust
A carven lip, a nose, an eye
From Babylon or Egypt
Or Ur of the Chaldees.
Such basalt fragments of the Ancient World
Are mostly a forest of conventional forms,
An ordered wilderness of hieratic features
And empty, speechless eyes.
Would you recognise,
Passing him in the street,
Great Rameses,
In spite of that vain king's
Innumerable effigies ?
I would not know him.
I should know
The Cretan Snake Goddess,
Banished now to Boston,
Subject of countless cultural teas :
I should recognise her :
(Indeed I saw her but this spring in Rome
Attending a lecture on the Vestal Virgins.)
But I should know nothing of her—
Except the title
Archæologists have given her—
Nothing.
Socrates then, I think,
Has the first European face,

[1] See Appendix, p. 99, note (3).
[2] See Appendix, p. 99, note (4).

The first face of history,
As he gazes at us
Out of the granite forest of dead limbs,
Out of the faceless armies of the past,
The indistinguishable armies of the dust.
Socrates is the first,
The foremost face,
For we know who he was,
And how he felt and spoke,
And how his fellows felt toward him.
Yet were these only Plato's fables,
Still we should know him if we passed him;
You would cry, you would cry out,
"Look,
Look, there is Socrates!"

Then come the others that we know,
Much after, many,
Yet how few in all:
Tawny Cleopatra with her golden eyes
Loving the skin-deep luxuries,
And then her lover, and that bane of schoolrooms,
Julius Cæsar,
With his affected laurels and his eunuch voice,
Then his imperial nephew,
Then Cicero and Virgil,
Seneca, full of a gloomy, bearded, beetling silence,
Pondering, it may be,
On the strongly-evincèd idiosyncrasies
Of his strange young pupil—
Another face we all know—
And then a mob of minor, mottled, marbled Cæsars,
With the coarse, half-finished, transatlantic faces
Of hustling, dyspeptic business men,
Heading whole legions
Of toga'd mediocrities
As voracious and vulgarian.
Then, straight from the Circus,

The Empress Theodora in her purple dignity
Of pearls and headdress,
And then . . .
And then again for centuries
A forest of conventional faces
Striving to look out from their golden haze,
Imprisoned in their golden dust
Of gesso or mosaic. . . .
And then, the first face to return to us,
First of a great procession still unended,
Is Dante, with his gothic,
Falcon-like nobility of soul and person. . . .

Thus it would not be altogether incorrect
To say that Mr. Samuel Southern
Had the first face of European history,
For one would have known him anywhere
As Socrates—
Though, too, one might have found him
A satyr, tangled in the vines,
And dallying with loves
As much unlike as possible
To Mrs. Southern and the steady love she bore him,
Or wise as Socrates, again,
A thin bearded sage
Huddled in the foreground
Of a chinese landscape,
Against hill, waterfall and flowering fruit-tree.
But Mr. Southern, Socrates of the market garden,
Did not resemble that philosopher
In habits or morality.
He could not afford wine,
And need throw no cloak
Over the recumbent form of Mrs. Southern. . . .

Yet still I see his wise and ancient face
Gazing at me from the dust,
Gazing at me, first face from the past.

(2) IN THE MARKET GARDEN

Mr. Samuel Southern in reality
Toyed in no myrtle grove,
Nor was he static in the forefront
Of any oriental landscape.
It is always on a summer day
(Then were no days
Save summer days,
Or a few days of swansdown,
When the old elms
Held high their hundred antlers,
Now spun of glass and silver,
Into the brittle blue of winter)
That I see him, sitting before a table,
Making up accounts in a vast book,
A local god, who blossoms on this stone platform
Beneath the shelter of a tulip tree,
Tallying life with death.
An emanation from the soil is he,
And yet a miniature god in his miniature heaven;
Behind him (the cloud posed for his godship)
Showed the gleaming, faded Orangery
Through whose mackerel-cloudy yet transparent scales
Could still be detected
(For chiming bells are due as much,
As much decreed to minor gods,
As rolling guns for the salute of native princes)
The sad, pale ringing
Of a thousand waxen bells,
Gently swinging, nodding, ringing
High in the dark and leafy air.

There sat the god, and for the heaven he ruled,
Lay sprawled across the park, the old square garden
Full of the feathered trunks of apple trees,
Whose fluttered leaves ride, small cupids on a golden breeze.

Here Mr. Southern, rustic deity,
Could tot up to his satisfaction
The local lives and deaths,
The christenings, the marriages, the funerals
For which he customarily supplied—
    According to th' inexorable laws
    Of birth and death—
    Or let us say of Supply and Demand—
Appropriate floral decorations.
And oh, he cherished a Shakespearian appetite
For every word of sexton and of verger,
And for each gesture of the undertaker.

(3) NO FLOWERS BY REQUEST

Under the apple trees
The garden was divided
Into four quarters,
Each box-edged and trim.
One quarter, thus, was given up to funerals,
And nominally one to christenings,
Though, actually, interchangeable,
    Haunted by every damp, albino ghost
    In its own season,
        By all the decadent and spectral blossoms
        From fainting snowdrop to the weak narcissus,
        From fat, white daisies
        To white asters,
    While, worse than such moist ghosts
Were those dry, lifeless, stillborn, chilly flowers
That never can tremble and flutter as other flowers do like a bird on the breeze,
But can only quake and rustle and rattle.
And then, in a Good Year,
    An influenza or a typhoid year,
He did a wun'erful lot o' trade,
    He told me,
In white chrysanthemums—
Nothing like white chrysanthemums
To give the rich but cold look
That was wanted.

Then there was a quarter given up to weddings—
    But a lot liked white for weddings too, Mrs. Southern for example—
And that final quarter for assorted flowers,
Suited for bazaars and jubilees,
Victorious wars and vicarage jumble-sales.
For these he recommended something patriotic,
Geraniums and lobelias,
        With a touch
            Of white. . . .

(4) CONQUERING WHITE

"*Why does the passing mention of a White Friar or a White Nun evoke such an eyeless statue in the soul?*"

. . . Yet so like Socrates—
His horror of suicide, for example,
His constant returning to it,
Was not that, one wondered,
Some dim memory of the hemlock cup?
And then that habit of his,
Of jumping up and thumping
His feet upon the pavers, thrashing
His arms together,
Was not that, too, a memory,
A memory of the poison, that beginning,
Strikes first with death-cold fingers
At the hands and feet?

But no,
After how many years, I understood!
A suicide
Implied
A quiet funeral,
Deprived a man
Of livelihood;
And, to this horror of the impious act,
He added a loathing of illegitimate children—
Spiteful little creatures
Doing a man out of a job
At that age—
Or rather out of two jobs,
Wedding and christening.

And, while he stuttered under mossy trees,
Already the white flowers
Crept nearer to him
With the passing hours,

And, in the end, white caught him for a second time ;
And this was worse, far worse
Than when her enemy, the dust, caught Mrs. Southern,
For he had always thought of white as ally,
Dependable, and even help to fortune,
And now it treacherously turned upon him.

Nature impeded Mr. Southern
From attaining to
The eloquence of Socrates.
To hear him at his best
One must entice him to,
Inveigle him within, the Orangery.
Once there, this rustic, bearded goat and god
Caught so inappropriately
In such a delicate thicket
Of glossy green leaves,
Sprinkled with the flat, victorian rosettes
Of waxen white, fat pink and marble-streakèd petals,
Might be induced, with fortune favouring,
To stammer out the latin names of flowers.
His tongue resembled Sisyphus
Condemned in Tartarus
To roll a boulder up the hill,
And when it fell back,
Bounding again
Down the hill
With the sound
Of a Centaur's
Mad gallop,
Must, once more roll it up the steep cliff-side.
No sooner had Mr. Samuel Southern's tongue
Attempted a particular pebble
(Let us call it "Agapanthus")
Than it began to fall, and must be fetched again.
Thus, even the Sexton, when he called
To gather-in the dolorous floral details
Of next Wednesday's fashionable funeral,
Was not above inducing Mr. Southern
To indulge in an orgy
Of excited Magnolia Grandiflora,
Would tempt him with an Amaryllis,
Point at an Antirrhinum and enquire its name,

Accuse Montbretia of being Lil-lil-lilums
And so entail explanatory denials,
Till finally he came before the plant
Which here obtained such unexpected popularity—
For, as Mr. Southern said,
"All of 'em notices it"—
That plant which, in the spring,
Displays deep-green crustacean claws,
Then blazes out with purple tinsel stars,
And finally, in the transmuting autumn,
Turns to Jove's gold beard—
Mysterious, mystic, Mesembryanthemum.

PHOEBE SOUTHERN

(1) PHOEBE SOUTHERN

It was not
By Phoebe's hair of northern sunlight,
Weaving pale gold, pale green, all caught in gold,
That one would recognise her,
Nor by her figure
That like Daphne seemed
About to change into a lithe young tree
Of earliest spring, whose shrill green curls,
Unfolding like the purest melodies,
Are weighted down with coral buds and bells—
All swinging on the branches, gently ringing
In time with the deep-throated hornpipes,
The flings, the jigs and rigadoons
That are the favourite tunes
Of English birds, adventurous
Wave-braving mariners—
Nor by her green eyes' animal, swift flash,
Forswearing such arboreal temptation,
But by the crooning of her dove-like laughter,
That fluttering laughter,
Laughter of birds high up, content in their jade summer,
The laughter of a naiad,
As she flits like a dryad through the drowsing woods,
As she drifts down the orchards
With their anchored clouds,
Or across the lawns, like Leda for the moment
Enfolded, swallowed up in the flashing, frothing feathers
Of those proud swans, the fountains ;
Still laughing is she,
Always questioning, always laughing,
Her voice carrying always, even in its laughter,
The upward-speeding, arrow-angle of a question.

(2) SILVER LANCES

PHOEBE saw him as he tilted at the Turk's Head,
Riding low, stooping under the branches of the trees,
Half Robin Hood and half Crusader,
In his green uniform a-jingle with silver mail.

She saw him as he rode by at the gallop
Look toward her, turning in his saddle,
He had seen her and she saw him as he rode by at the gallop,
And the moving and the ripple of his chest now that his arm made ready
To tilt at the Turk's Head with his long lance of silver,
While in turn the sun tilted at him as he rode,
Tilting long shimmering lances down at him through the golden branches.

It was
After the Flower Show and the music and the uniforms,
After the flowers, music and its furbelows,
The changing sunlight and the waving trees,
After the charging lancers with their lances flashing,
After the tents, the booths and Punch-and-Judy shows,
After the slow wandering, slow wondering,
After the shifting and the tangle
Of trees and flowers and tents and gaily moving people
Upon the vegetable-scented, aphrodisiac breeze,
After the flashing brass and the heroic trumpets,
Swooping like gold-billed eagles down the wind,
After the conjuror and the rustic magic,
The green, the red and then the golden jangle
Of buzzing tunes amid the fluttering leaves,
That, laughing in the dusk, she met him,
That martial, moustached, stiff ghost of a cocoanut,
Sergeant Maypole,
With his matted hair and white teeth,

His wooden, hairy face and cocoanut-like muscles—
Though to her he was that glamorous crusader,
Romantic, amorous, Robin-Hood crusader,
Set for eternity amid the music
Of trumpets under trees,
In an unimaginable blaze of glory.

(3) AFTER THE FLOWER SHOW

Her laughter had now lost its questioning,
The golden arrow had sped out of her voice,
And left it empty.
First they noticed the empty quiver : and then, later,
The new and golden line of fruitfulness.
At this, there came the horror
Of cross, pained voices
That had been kind so long—
Voices pretending tragedy.
Her feet were set in shame
And sorrow, for he could not, would not come to see her,
Though she defended him and hid his name,
For her caught ever
In the accidental glory
Of silver lances, music, trees and sunshine
While trumpets blared the eagle voice of glory,
Which she mistook for honour.
But she remembered, as she lay there,
Hidden as she hid his name,
How he had looked toward her, turning in his saddle,
And the rippling of him as he rode by at the gallop,
Tilting a silver lance beneath the tilting sun.

And now her crooning voice, that had gurgled through
Such few, such slender summers,
Stopped altogether ;
In its place the moan, the inexpressible wailing
Of a new, senseless life
Sent down for its deceiving.

And it did seem hard, so very hard indeed,
As the Undertaker said,
Considering that Mr. Southern's feelings
Might have been considered ;
Always very strong on that point, he was,
Though it was not so much the affliction, actual affliction

As the shame, you know, the shame ;
Considering that he liked, and one could understand it,
A funeral to be a funeral,
With no Hole-in-the-Corner sneakiness,
And considering that not a single flower had been sent,
And considering that he had decorated something beautiful
So many funerals,
Really just for love of it,
Giving more than the money's worth—
And not even know the name !
And considering there were others,
Sister, brothers,
To be considered,
And Mrs. Southern,
Dusting just the same. .

LUKE KEMBLEY

(1) LUKE KEMBLEY

SOMEWHERE in a clearing in South Kensington,
That tall, gold-faced forest of autumn chimneys—
    Not in the clinically-marbled Victoria and Albert
    Where the tortoise-shell-rimmed ghosts of dark officials
    Ever giggle and shuffle cynically
    Through the rattling avenues
    Of spectral vitrines—
But in the ochre-tiled renaissance palace
Where children and informing governesses,
    Overwhelmed by the gigantic shadow
    Of a gibbonous stone Darwin,
        Who, thus obtaining
        An appropriately materialistic
        Semi-eternity,
        Leans forward, apparently
        About to spring like Hermes
        Into the murky void,
Peer at the intricate horror
Held in the many-times magnified image
Of a common house-fly,
Or are interested
By the inch-to-a-mile inroads of a weevil
Into the cavernous interior
Of a ship's biscuit—
There, then, will you find preserved
A portion of the skin,
A patch of orange hair,
Formerly the peculiarly personal property
Of the Giant Sloth—
    An extinct animal
    That once nibbled the green shoots of palm trees
    Much as the present-day rabbit
    Nibbles a young blade of grass.

Of such a texture,
Such a tint,
Was Luke Kembley's hair,
Though his moustache was darker,
Altogether more dynamic.
He was built up of red, concentric circles,
And his voice held all the local music
Of iron-works, lowing herds,
And a pebble rolling, grinding round
In the bed of his native stream, the Rother.
The pupils of his eyes
Were as the swift and leaden pellets
Which he loved to deal out
To all things feathered in the autumn,
While the brown rings that surrounded these pellets
Seemed the fur of a kind, shy animal.
The redness of Luke Kembley's face
Was diversified by blue marks
In any quantity
—Blue marks
Which, by the expert attribution of the young,
Could be divided,
Placed in two categories,
As the ornaments natural to his family,
Or as the unfortunate results
Of a friend's shooting.

(2) IN SEPTEMBER

The autumn was Luke Kembley's season,
October was Luke Kembley's month—
Though there was a lot to be said for September,
A nice fine September,
Hung with red apples and with golden pears,
A nice fine September,
Hung with glistening cobwebs ;
A nice fine September,
When hilltop and meadow were full of the smell of the cabbage
And when his stout shooting-boots
First plodded down the furrows
Of the fecund earth.

Stealthily crouching, he would stalk
Between the golden forts
And crenellated towers of summer,
Thrown up by the sweating binders
Against the invading Autumn—
For it was always a late harvest—
Between the leafy avenues of the root-crops,
Between the frozen waves
Of sea-green cabbages,
Off which the marble-veinèd dew would rattle,
As he passed,
Like the spray from breakers.

Sometimes his boot
Would crunch and crackle on a root,
As, later, would the strong teeth
And rhythmic jaws
Of the devouring cattle ;
Then the plump birds would whir
Almost from beneath his foot,
Whir through the butterfly-hung air
With the rushing sound of an ogre's indrawn breath.

But in September
The Farmers were the trouble.
Farmers were never contented,
Farmers thought they had the right to everything,
Farmers grumbled,
Farmers took the law into their own hands,
And you could not stop them :
So that,
Though there was a lot to be said for September
(A nice fine September),
October was Luke Kembley's month.

(3) AND OCTOBER

October was Luke Kembley's month,
When the golden castles of the corn
Had been slighted by the roundhead autumn.
Then, red as the berries that grow
On the hawthorn hedges—oh !
He could walk after pheasants with a gun.

Day and night,
Spring and summer long,
He would lurk in the woods,
Eating bread and cheese
And never resting,
Preparing for October.
He would guard the sacred birds,
He would give them to drink,
He would offer up grain at their wooden altars :
He would even secure
Their effigies of straw
Within low branches,
So that,
In the dark,
A panicked poacher
Could fire for ever at a sitting pheasant
And no bird would fall.

In the night he would stalk the running sounds,
Pursue the flickering lights :
Then the blue tapestries
Would rustle sullenly, swaying
Puffed out upon the breath
Of the lank,
The dank, green ghosts
Of dead forests.

But
October was the month,
When the northern air is crystal,

And the berries grow all red upon the hedges—oh !
When the tall trees grow antlers,
And the three-prong'd leaves of the bracken
Undulate on the pure air
Just as the triple tails of imperial goldfish
Wave through their transparent element ;
When even the Sun,
Magnificent Inca,
Wraps himself each evening
For his ceremonial farewell
In gigantic pheasant-feathers.
Then Luke Kembley's breath
Lingered behind him on the air,
As he walked back through the dusk
To find the sharp fingers of the fire
Gilding Mrs. Kembley
In the cottage on the hill.

But now through the cold and the long Octobers
The frost-flowers grow on the stiff stone borders,
And the dark winds blow
Through the lepers' window,
And the Parson blows his nose
As he passes in,
And the sky above
Is as dull as sin——
And the poachers trample down the dying woods,
And the pheasants are few,
The pheasants are few.

MRS. KEMBLEY

(1) "THE BOULDERS"

Up there, ever so high
Above the dusky meeting-places
Of all those chattering, chlorotic ghosts of forests,
Thin, knife-edged and chaotic spectres,
Drawn up so palely tall and chilly,
Subsisting only on the bone-white winds
That whistled slowly, secretly
Out of vaults and caverns and from grottoes
Full of falling daggers and of rusty needles,
Lived Mrs. Kembley, asserting by her very presence
The absurdity
Of all that lacks material rotundity,
And sharing that herb-scented,
Crystal-clear existence
Common to hilltops and the slopes of mountains.

Her light and air belonged,
Not to the villages below,
Black flags unfurled and flying from their chimneys,
But to Alp, Apennine or far Tibet,
In fact wherever close-cropped grass, stone fences,
And the little flowers of mountains
Ringing as clear and brave as cowbells,
Can be found, with round-faced people
And sweet air cooled by the leaping run
Of white-winged waters ;
Wherever pigs and chickens, goats and sheep and children
Litter the hill, scrabble and idly peck
Such almond-husk, soft greenness.

Balanced upon this miniature of a mountain
She stood, among the great round stones
That looked as though some Titan of the sky,
Observing Mr. Kembley's love of sport,

Had for a time adopted his ideal,
Determining—
And this was not so human
Or so pleasant—
To play Luke Kembley
To Luke Kembley's pheasant.
But fortunately something—lack of practice,
Perhaps—frustrated such gigantic justice.

(2) CIRCLES

The very house seemed circular,
A beehive or a top,
While Mrs. Kembley
Was not only wife
To Mr. Kembley—
Far, far more than that.
Her very face and build and engineering
Shouted her " Female " to his " Male " :
The same concentric circles,
    Highly coloured,
But used quite differently,
Arranged so dexterously,
Turned out into two lots,
Two continents,
Connected by a scarcely visible isthmus ;
Or she might be an hour-glass,
    With a head above it.
So round was she, upon her two small feet
She seemed to spin, spin more than move,
Among the watery pleasances of her kitchen,
While beyond the open door,
Out in the garden
    That lay scratched upon the hilltop
    Like a pattern made with a stick upon the sands,
All the flowers were either round and sweet
    And highly coloured,
Or, gently feathered like a pheasant,
Spun upon a pleasant breeze.

(3) INTERIOR OF "THE BOULDERS"

The house was fortunately warm, a wigwam,
Woven of fur and feather ;
Had it been cold,
It would have been a mortuary,
A morgue for every feather, fur and fin.
There were feathers in vases,
Feathers in patterns hung up on the walls,
Feathers under glass,
And a feathered fire-screen.
Even the flames that this screen caged
Became diabolically mimetic,
And shook gay feathers from the grate,
Unfolded plumy tails.
Then there were innumerable fragments, finely mounted,
Of the beasts of the field as well as of birds of the air.
While huge fishes, with their fixed bright eyes,
Like those of paralytics,
Could yet contrive to catch,
From their glass houses,
Which boasted imitation reeds and ferns,
The bird-quick eye of Mrs. Kembley,
As she spun, bustled, opened and shut the doors.
Indeed, they swam right up the walls,
And mouthed aridly at her from the frieze ;
While outside, in the kitchen, in the airy larder,
Through which there even flew
A shrill, blue-feathered, little Alpine wind,
Were more birds, more dead birds,
Real birds, tied by their coral feet to rails,
More fish, all shining, damp and speckled,
Chequered or mail-coated,
With a piteous fin yet twitching,
Cradled in green rushes and long grass,
Just as they were brought in—
Rushes and green grass that cruelly parodied
Those green, faint-waving weeds

That had been shade
For all their glittering courtships,
Those weeds that rippled in the stream's clear play.
(This parody consisting
In the want of movement
In things that should, it seemed,
Move naturally and imperceptibly :
Just thus is death the parody of sleep.)
But Mrs. Kembley spun about
And bustled through her mortuary,
Her small feet tapping out
Quick staccato patterns on the hard, stone pavers ;
There was much to do——
And the sound of the golden threshing
Was borne up from the field below.

(4) EVENING

Of an evening, Mrs. Kembley
Would wait for Mr. Kembley on the hill—
Waiting a little frightened,
For the woods under were so still,
So still,
For the mist crept up the nearer valleys,
Whispering white and chill ;
Down in them something murmured
(Was it the distant rill ?),
More dusky grew the long green alleys,
And the voices of the woods stabbed, sharp and shrill.
Then the nearest light winked yonder,
Miles down, by the mill,
And the Roman road ran straight and silent,
Empty and waiting, it seemed, along the hill.

She knew there was no reason to be frightened,
There was nothing for her to fear.
The valleys thus were always whitened
By the mist ; the cruel wood voices sounded shrill
Always when all else was still——
But darkness was sidling near,
And nearer,
And Mrs. Kembley waited on the hill. . . .

GRAND FINALE

SYMPHONY

If I must leave the faces that I love,
Let it be when every dove
    Is crooning, swinging in the soft June trees,
And roses ride on every breeze :
    Thus would I love the faces that I leave
    And need not so much grieve.

If not in that foaming, if not in that surging
Season of feathery green leaves and bird-song
Falling to cool the evening air with the silver whips of fountains,
Then let it later be,
When deep, how deep, within the silent wood
The yellow noons of fuller seasons brood,
And all the turrets, all the towers
Of foxgloves and of blue bell-flowers—
    Like the clustered steeples
    Of some deserted minster in a forest
    Which in a single night grew up to hide them
    From the rapacity of kings and statesmen—
Crumble and tumble down to gothic ruin
Amid the skeleton feathers spun by spiders ;
When the swordsman sunlight
Scarce can pierce the sullen foliage
To prick with an increased intensity
The smallest patch of green and hairy grass,
There to reveal
With white-hot steel
No flowers pressed between caressing leaves,
No tenderly unfolding buds,
Only the formal, coral beads
Of seeding bluebell, or the timid
Freckled and speckled faces of wild strawberries.
Then, of a sudden, into this faintly humming,
Flowerless and warm haven
Bray the red, grinning mouths of trumpets,

The coiling voices of a thousand brassy serpents
Invading this terrestrial heaven :
For there,
    There in the open and the golden spaces,
Where that grand old lion the August sun
Purrs and roars and wags his lashing tail
Behind the black, strong bars
Forged for our safety by defending trees,
There, as an offering to the English Ceres—
    Divinity less worldly and less wanton,
    Less abundant in her charms,
    Less ready to appease
    The flames they raise
    Than her proligerous Italian sister—
Is our flowery, rustic festival,
Where we can see them all,
These hot and happy faces—
    Faces that we leave
    And need not so much grieve.

Sound, then, proud trumpets,
And you, bugles, blow.
Let Time, cruel corrugant,
Puff out his shrunken body and his sunken cheeks,
And then with arm updrawn and arrogant
Hold a gold skull up to his old, dry mouth
As though he were a lashing, splashing, spouting Triton
With pearly conch set to salt, pouting lips.
Let him crow out his music
Till the dead arise,
And march with their innumerable armies—
    Innumerable and intolerable
    Because these armies are invulnerable—
Shading their hollow laughing eyes
Against the unexpected glare of daylight,
Their mouths set in a fixed and empty smile.
Let our few dead stand out for us, march past,
While white clouds flutter from each golden mast,

Sound out, gold trumpets,
And you, bugles, blow
Your aching summons to those down below,
To those who lie so still and sad below
(Oh, do they hear it,
Do they strive to stir,
Does it prick them to a movement ?).
Now dies the fanfare
With the brazen clanging of a closing door.

Vast yellow mushrooms, tents are pitched
Beneath tall shadow-weaving trees
That wring long hands
And flutter their green fingers,
Amazed at so much boisterous hilarity,
While the grass, blue hair of wood-nymphs,
Displays broad yellow partings, leading to the tents ;
Partings made yellow with the trip and tramp
Of boots, such stiff and torturing best-boots.
Now in the yellow fungoid shade within
So thick a crowd attempts to move
That all the bodies merging into one
Make movement slow and vastly ponderous—
As though an elephant
Both filled the tent
And strove to trample through it—
While this beast, more fabulous
Than any howdah'd favourite
Kneeling in grey salaam
Before some proud, some emerald-crested peacock of a Rajah,
Supports a thousand shifting heads,
Each with a bowler hat or bonnet
Jauntily perched upon it.
And all these faces, shining faces full of wonder,
Perpetually are shifting, blossoming anew
(And yet not only do these faces shift and blossom,
But some drop down each year,
Withered as though by magic, nothing left of them—

Only another youthful head blossoms more gaily
There, where the old one nodded for so long,
Not even a small gap now left there to record it),
And all these faces, shining faces full of wonder,
Open up into fresh patterns of contentment,
As they peer and stare and let the scene
Drum through them, permeate them with its marvels ;
Intent with both eyes and one ear.
For now the fanfare changes
To a rhythmic drone ;
The other ear is bent to catch
The succulent spirals of the tune,
Sea-fruit thrown up upon this littered shore
By the brassy ocean's snore.
Such tunes have lives as much as mortals,
For, just as gods breathe into men
The life that grows, then flows, then ebbs away,
Thus does a tune derive its life from man ;
And this,
That once made swoon
With lilting languor and soft gurgle
Of strings that twirl like fountains in the wind,
Or waterfalls that waver
Beneath the sun's hot stare,
With all its muted harmonies,
Its essenced elegancies,
Its fawning and phanariot graces
And syren voices of a hothouse spring,
That once made undulate and sway
The drooping, swansdown shoulders,
The swinging crinolines, the plump gold laces,
The counterfeit distinction, whiskered faces,
That once made sparkle, twinkle, glitter
The constellations of an unearned splendour,
In that strange episode, inverted fairy-story,
Where for a whim the wicked fairy, Fortune,
Struck every swindler, rogue, impostor
With her golden wand,

And each was turned
Into a pavonine and gilded princeling,
Now old and weak and draggled, scarcely moves,
A wooden, rustic face
For all its bombast and fanfaronade.
Yet this empty, broken shell
Matches the relics that we see about us,
The bits of fur and feather, and the sequined
Finery of such a festival,
Where dance dead fashions with a clownish elegance
Through yellow air, scented symphonically
With hot red roses, with carnations,
Prize onions and prize potatoes,
In their various armours of gold, their armours of purple,
With the smell of hairy, yellow boards
Pressing down upon hot, yellow grass.
And through this gloom, and through the blatant sounds
Of unearned and departed glory,
The warm, contented faces
Smile, speak a word, or hang above
The bouquets and the nosegays and the posies
That wilt in jampots and inferior vases,
Carefully consider horticultural triumphs
That singly ride
In pride as specimens.
Among these happy hanging gardens
Of red and rustic faces,
Which hide few fancies
And are round and open as the pansies
That tied in little crumpled velvet bouquets
Curl up their petals, there are some we know—
For here,
Quite near,
Is Mr. Goodbeare,
Dear, bearded, godfearing Mr. Goodbeare,
(Who worked all day
At his carpenter's tray,
Do you remember Mr. Goodbeare ?)

Put in mind so strongly of the year
(Would it be in old Sir Nigel's time,
When that escaped and hungering tiger
Burnt bright through Foxton Wood,
When the Master took his red-tongue-flickering hounds
And hunted it then and there as a Gentleman Should ?)
Well, that year the flowers
Were ready, put-up something beautiful—
A real gardener, believe me, in those days—
But then a storm comes, and I says to Mrs. Goodbeare. . . .
But Mrs. Nutch,
That ancient owl in spectacles,
Was not attending.
She had set out so early,
Trudging so slowly through the rose-dyed dawn,
Carrying so carefully her campanulas,
While the sun's first rays
Darted, flat and green as lizards,
Across the translucent, milk-white lawns of the morning-dew.
But as the daggers of the light ascending
Were caught among fantastic cobwebs,
Festooned in garlands, hanging down like streamers,
As though put there for her derision, from the trees,
These shimmered and sparkled with delusive glory
(Oh, well she knew, well she could recognise
Such gleaming of a thousand devil-eyes,
That false, that trumpery but tempting glitter
Which is the lure of all things Babylon-born.)
But, as she trudged, each trembling belfry
She clasps, rings out a faint, sad chime
In tune to Mrs. Nutch's footsteps,
Footsteps, sinking, ever sinking,
Into the greedy and the well-fed ground,
As she slips down gently out of sight
Behind the trees now growing ever taller.
No ear for Mr. Goodbeare, she must count
The Catholics, who are likely to win prizes :
Not, she must admit, that Mrs. Goodbeare

Was actually a Roman : not exactly.
And yet the burden of that wooden,
If well-turned, biblical imagination,
As she stood there, creaking at the flowers,
Imagining how they would creep over the desolate stones,
And fill each crevice with their blossoming—
Though not one stone should stand upon another—
Was certainly more richly ritualistic
Than that of her mouse-warring neighbour
(Yet even there, forbearing Mrs. Goodbeare
Was wondering wearily if Mr. Goodbeare
Could swear to " near the year " to Mrs. Nutch,
Or whether, really, Mr. Goodbeare,
Dear, bearded, godfearing Mr. Goodbeare
Was not remembering to remember
Too much ?).
Out of the crowd, monopolising
More than her fair share of the many-headed elephant,
Rises, so glorying and proud
Of h'Alfred h'as chief judge,
The bulk of Mrs. Hague, exultant
At managing to come here
In spite of Tuesday being a busy day,
But, Mrs. Southern, if you look at it like that,
H'each day's a busy day,
For
Monday h'is Washing Day,
Tuesday h'is Baking Day,
Wednesday h'Alfred 'as 'is dinner h'early,
Thursday h'is Baking Day again,
Friday h'is a busy day, a very busy day,
And Saturday prepares the way for Sunday.
And as she spoke, from her voluminous kindness
How many a brooch broke out surprisingly,
Embossing that abundant bosom,
Just as a limpet or a barnacle
Clamps itself to, and armours well, the swelling
And the noble figure-head of some old ship.

Then Dust's Arch-Enemy agreed with her,
There was much, so very much to do,
Dust everywhere, on everything,
Even on the chairs, the tables, and the portraits.
Ah, had she recognised the nature,
The real name, even, of her enemy,
She would surely have surrendered,
Giving up her span of hopeless conflict. . . .
For what is Dust, save Time's most lethal weapon,
The very instrument through whom
He overcame great Nineveh and Rome,
Ophir and Trebizond, now deep, so deep in dust?
Yet, knowing not this, her thinly-bitter smile
Melts to a broader, kindlier one to-day,
As she admires botanical monstrosities,
The living evidence of Nature's skill,
A cretinous but technical achievement,
Gigantic calceolarias, their faces spreading
Into a golden, mottled grin,
Blossoms shaped like a shoe—
Just like a golden shoe,
You would know it anywhere,
So dainty and so neat—
Then Mr. Nutch, brown-bearded bear,
Came up to speak, but left them in a moment,
To walk outside the tent,
Examining the grass and palings,
Expecting Mischief,
Anxious that no damage should be done:
And no doubt even now the scamps
Were in the orchards (hidden in the upper leafy thickets,
Hung thick with shrill-green, acid stars,
That only they could pluck and eat
Like laughing cherubs caught in a gold cage,
Pecking at fruit as do the singing birds)—
Stealing Property,
That was what it was
(Clumsily he must grab and ramble,

Angrily he must dart and grumble,
Heavily he must sway and shamble,
After the nimble boys),
And, as he turned away, thin, blue-lipped Mrs. Southern
Conveyed the news to Mrs. Hague.
The youngest, Fred, she heard—
Or so They Said—
Was doing well in London——
But the Boy
Was not like other boys,
Too fond of Moping and of Reading Books,
To her mind he would never be
The Man his Father was,
Because . . .
But here was Mrs. Kembley, fresh
From her mountain top, and spinning
Her slow, red circles through the tent,
While her build, her very shape, proclaimed
Emphatic " Female " to the " Male "
Of Mr. Kembley, now informing Mary-Anne—
Wise, simple old woman
Who had pitched a patchwork pavilion
Upon an island, where she could feed
The piebald and the tartan ducks,
From which web-footed universe
She could skill the weather
And observe the stars
Flashing their prophecies—
That the Farmers were the trouble,
Farmers were never contented,
Farmers thought they had the right to everything.
Farmers grumbled,
Farmers took the law into their own hands
And you could not stop them,
So what would happen in September,
If it was a nice fine September,
He didn't know—For Mr. Goodbeare could remember——
And Mary-Anne had seen four herons

And a flight of wheeling birds at midday—
Such a thing had never happened
Since the time the Blue Man rode—
While, as they chatted, Phoebe Southern
Slipped past them, out into the glare and glory,
    Into the shifting tangle
    Of flowers and people,
    The green, the red, and then the golden jangle
    Of buzzing tunes amid the fluttering leaves :
    The laughter of her voice still carrying
    The upward-speeding golden arrow,
    So soon to leave it.
In th' inner tent, apart
Stands Alfred, always thus, alone and a little aloof—
    Alfred, white Sultan,
    Rajah Brooke of tropic isles
    In one of his dominions—
Surveying dahlias with their heavy, velvet heads
Hung low, touching the violet armour
Of a sweet potato, inspecting calceolarias.
" Them's a lovely new bloom," he said to Mr. Southern
Huddled against the door,
Discussing " lil-lil-lilums " with the Undertaker,
Here in undress, lacking the ominous polish
Of shining top-hat, ebony frock-coat,
Whereas quite often he would call on Mr. Southern
(Just a friendly visit, fresh from " business ")
In black and stifling splendour,
Till his bright gold ring
Seemed but the brazen handle to an ebon coffin,
While even as he speaks now, now as he speaks,
Under his unctuous, smooth tones could be detected
Down, so far down,
The grating of scraping iron-spades upon stones in the cold earth,
When the little giggling worms wriggle for a time into damp daylight.
But Mr. Southern laughed, looked at me then,
As now he gazes at me from the dust,
Gazing at me, first face from the past.

Sound out, proud trumpets,
And you, bugles, blow
Over the English Dead,
Not slain in battle, in no sense sublime
These rustic figures caught at last by Time,
And yet their blood was warm and red
As any roses that in England grow
To these anonymous armies of the Dead.
Blow, bugles, blow ;
Sound out, proud trumpets, let your brazen thunder
Wake them, to make them pass
Before us under the wide sky.
(Thunder, drums and trumpets, thunder,
Wake them, to rise from where they lie
Under,
Under,
Under
The green grass
Under the wide grey sky.)

And as the flowers in the yellow tent,
These bouquets, and these nosegays and these posies,
Wilt, hour by hour, in their inferior vases,
So wilt and wither these poor, happy heads, now bent
Above the blossoms, year by year.
And as they stoop, and bend, and form their judgment
With careful and appraising eye,
So, surely, for a moment I could see
God's face bent down, and peering curiously
Above these faces, wide and open as the pansies'
Faces, which have no doubts, and hide no fancies.
If I must leave these faces that I love,
And it is not when every dove
Is crooning, swinging in the soft June trees,
And roses ride on every breeze,
Then let me take of them my last farewell
At this sad, this gay, this flowery festival ;

So would I love the faces that I leave
And need not so much grieve.
(*Thunder, drums and trumpets, thunder,*
As they pass,
And fall back under,
Under
The green grass.)

APPENDIX

(1) *Page* 23, *Line* 11. It has now, apparently, been established that epidemics of influenza only break out when the temperature of the earth is below a certain level.

(2) *Page* 31, *Line* 1. Campanulas are fed by expert gardeners with blood, which causes them to blossom peculiarly freely.

(3) *Page* 59, *Line* 4. The earliest Egyptian mummies are found embalmed with their knees updrawn almost to their chins.

(4) *Page* 59, *Line* 6. It is suggested by Prof. Elliot Smith that all art evolved out of the ceremonial treatment of the dead in Egypt.

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